

Management of severe burns in the context of COVID-19 pandemic

Dear Colleagues,

Severe and extensive burn injuries remain one of the most challenging scenarios within the management of critically ill patients. Between 4 and 22% of burn patients presenting to emergency departments require critical care. The severely burned patient differs from other patients needing intensive care in many ways, the most relevant being the necessity of a comprehensive approach and treatment, which entail resuscitation and monitoring of the evolution of the pathophysiology of the burn injury, management of inhalation injury and edema formation, early operational interventions and prolonged wound care, management of metabolic status and nutritional support, infection control, and management of possible complications.

The pandemic by SARS-CoV-2 virus led to rapid changes in the management of severe burn injuries. Some burn centers had to close to admissions and transfer all patients to other services, which had to rapidly reconfigure to accommodate the increase in throughput. In areas where large burns are treated in multipurpose critical care units, the wave of COVID-19 patients required people in charge to take difficult strategic decisions, e.g. to use all critical care beds, including those allocated for burns, to manage the pandemic. Teams had to deal with restructuring their capabilities and working on contingencies, while always paying attention to protecting patients, staff and family members.

Overall, burn care has been conducted in challenging circumstances during the pandemic. New issues have been identified and addressed and staffs have learned to operate outside their comfort zone. Critical care units and burn centers would now be able to face not only a second wave of COVID-19 but any other situation in which burns need to be managed in extraordinary conditions, e.g. while wearing personal protective equipment, whether a future emergence of a pan-resistant organism or another unexpected outbreak. In this special issue of the Journal, we wish to give relevance to insights and reports of management of severe burns in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Through sharing, we hope to increase professionals' clinical preparedness, readiness and response actions for future challenges.

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Website of the special issue

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